5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

mischievous and aggressive, but also a trickster who (vainly) attempts to deceive his father for his own advantage.[1] Westermann[2] quotes a text in which Nyikang commends a liar (perhaps a licensed jester), and another in which it is made clear that it was Dak's cunning which resulted in the catching of one of the creatures, described as a *juok*, with which the Shilluk kingdom was originally built up. The traditions of the Shilluk kings recorded by Hofmayr give details of their duplicity and cunning, their military prowess, and their cruelty and caprice. In this way they are approximated to God for these, and particularly intelligence and knowledge, are qualities by which a man manifests the power of God in him. The very nature of the election to the Shilluk kingship gives an advantage to the clever, as well as to the ruthless and brave, and the office must constantly have offered opportunities for intrigue and homicide. These features of 'divine kingship' tend to be somewhat elided in European accounts of the sacred character of the office, but some of the interest of the Shilluk kingship lies in the fact that the sort of sacredness it represents is little associated with an ethical code. Nyikang and the kings, along with God, are nevertheless for the Shilluk the sanctions for the customary rules and norms of behaviour. Thus the sanction for the customary moral order of Shilluk society is not conceived primarily in ethical terms, but as a manifestation of successful power and intelligence. So the test of kingship is success in the widest sense, and an unsuccessful king is soon killed by his rivals or disposed of by his retainers.[3]

Social Values: Cleverness and Success

That intelligence and success are attributed to the favour of God may be seen in other ways. Spirits, or those who are divinely inspired, are shown in Shilluk stories to be both clever and successful. They know more than others, and they can turn this knowledge to their own advantage. The Shilluk *ajuogo* (diviners), whose power is said to come from *juok*, are such people, and Oyler says of them that 'the Shilluks think of the witch-doctors or medicine men as good, not because their lives are good, nor yet because their practice is good, but because they are looked upon as the channels through which occult powers may be transmitted to men'.[4] They are personally prosperous because they are necessary, and they are necessary because they know better than ordinary men how to achieve success; such a divinely inspired person may therefore be approached for help in stealing

[1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 61.

[2] 1912, p. 166.

[3] I have deliberately omitted any discussion of the killing of the Shilluk king, which by some authorities is said to be a ritual putting to death when the king's powers fail. The evidence for this is very confusing; in the records of the kings given by Hofmayr (1925), some clearly have died or been killed without ceremonial. It is difficult to reconcile this with the suggestion made by some authorities that the killing of the king is a ritual act performed to maintain the fertility and vitality of the land, cattle, and people, and that the ceremonial killing is believed to be essential for this, though misfortune for the whole land may later be attributed to some inadequacy in the funeral rites.

[4] Oyler, 1920.

22: Howell E-5 (1951) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

766 This superficial account of the death, burial and mourning ceremonies of the late *reth* Dak *wad* Fadiet adds a few further details to our records of previous burials.[1] There was no fundamental difference in the procedure, but it is worth noting the following points:—

(i) *reth* Fafiti *wad* Yor, who died in 1944, was not placed in a hut for any time, but was buried almost immediately in his personal village.[2] At the time it was said that since his father Yor had died and had not been thus immured, it was correct that his son likewise should be buried immediately. Past precedents are always deemed important by the Shilluk, even to the extent of altering established custom.

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(ii) In the case of his successor Anei *wad* Kur, the body was first laid in a hut at Fadwol, a village occupied by the slaves and dependants of his father Kur and was finally buried at Goibainy in his personal village. This was considered a return to normal custom. Both these villages are in the northern Shilluk area (Gerr). Mourning ceremonies were carried out at both, but there was no equivalent ceremony among the southern Shilluk.

(iii) It follows that the *wowo* ceremonies carried out for Dak *wad* Fadiet, first at Kujo in the southern Shilluk area (Luak) and then at Debwor in the northern area (Gerr), were dictated by his previous residence and not by any demand for a repetition based on this division of Shilluk country as might be expected.[3]

(iv) It appears, then, that what might be called the "lying in state," should take place in a village built near to the capital and built largely for the purpose. The burial should take place in the original village of the late *reth*, the home of his mother, or more often the home of his adoption.

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1 See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 18 *et seq* and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

2 Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

3 *Id.*, p. 6 and p. 75.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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342 Meanwhile a shallow pit is dug nearby, and to the broken soil sand and water are added, the mixture being puddled by vigorous treading till it has the consistency of a thick, sticky paste. When the rope weaving is finished, this mud paste is plastered on the wall within and without at the same time, until the whole is a solid mass about a foot thick. Another party of men is busy in the meantime preparing the framework of the roof; the older men make six thick rings of grass completely bound around with rope, graded from twelve feet to one foot in diameter; the younger men select six straight tree branches about seven feet long and as thick as a man's arm, and bind these to the largest of the grass rings with rope to form the base of a cone. The remaining rings are then tied inside the cone from base to apex which is then overlaid with millet stalks, securely fastened, and the framework is now complete and ready for lifting on to the top of the wall. These various stages of the operation are marked by the drinking of beer; the bowls are first filled when the mud is slapped on to the wall, a second time when the walls are finished off, and lastly when the roof is secured in its place. This marks the end of community labour, for the thatching can be done by one man assisted by a boy to throw the bundles of grass up to him.

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342 The thatcher begins at the base of the roof tying bundles of fine grass around the edge to form the eaves; the bundles overlap and hang about a foot over the edge of the framework. Sheaves of coarser grass are laid over these and fastened into position by rope laced through the millet stalks of the framework; at the apex the grass is gathered to a point, tightly bound with rope and neatly trimmed off. When the thatching is done, the women clean up the floor inside the hut and smooth it over with mud so that it has a firm, cement-like surface, and the house is then ready for occupation. This is a typical Shilluk dwelling; the king's own house may be a little better built and more elaborately thatched, but it will not differ in size or construction from this. Tradition must be observed, and as long as the king is content to live in a round house with mud walls, no window and only

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a small hole for entrance, no Shilluk may dare to build himself, say, a square hut, or improve the light and ventilation of the traditional dwelling by putting in a window.

The Shilluk is a fine fisherman, adept in the use of harpoon, fishing spear and net. The harpoon he uses consists of a loose barbed head of iron which is fitted into the socket of a long bamboo pole to which it is attached by a length of thin but extremely strong twine. When a large fish is caught on the barb, it jerks the head from the socket, and is then played by the fisherman until he is able to finish it off with his fish spear. The spear itself is normally used in the shallows of the river or swamp; the man casts it repeatedly into the soft mud as he walks along, hoping to spear the mud fish which lie in great numbers under the surface.

The use of the net by an expert is a delightful thing to watch; the net is large, fine-meshed and circular in shape, weighted round the edge with pieces of lead. The fisherman gathers it in folds over one arm and casts it with a clean, effortless sweep; it falls lightly on the water in a perfect circle, sinks slowly to the bottom and then is slowly gathered in. If it is empty, it is folded and cast again with the same easy, graceful motion.

Fishing is done all the year round by individuals, but the real season is from March to May when the river and the large inland water-courses (the khors) are at their lowest level. During this time several villages will combine together to fish a certain khor, and as women as well as men join in, it becomes a real community effort. The day before that appointed for the fishing, men will go to the khor and block up its outlets, then on the day itself there is a general exodus from the villages, the men carrying harpoons and spears, and canoes if the river has to be crossed, the women carrying heavy nets, and cooking pots too if the start is early. Arrived at the khor, the women fix the nets on poles firmly pushed into the deep mud, side by side, right across one end, leaving no way of escape. The men line up abreast at the other end and move slowly towards the nets, thrusting into the mud